

Austrian Newspaper Coverage of the Cistercian Jubilee in 1898

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AS THE CISTERCIAN Order celebrated the 800th Anniversary of its foundation in 1898, several major Austrian newspapers covered the events. Articles describing the festivities and book reviews of publications related to the occasion appeared in widely-circulated papers like *Die Reichspost* and *Das Vaterland*, as well as in smaller papers intended for clerical audiences.

The newspaper coverage helps us to understand how the Cistercian movement was portrayed as a medieval phenomenon, but also as a current event, relevant to the local dioceses and even mission territories. The jubilee coverage provides valuable evidence of late-nineteenth-century attitudes toward Cistercian reform. The distinctions between the Common Observance and Trappist communities were particularly sensitive in 1898, because the Trappists had founded their own order only six years before, in 1892. The newspaper accounts open up revealing, if sometimes contradictory, perceptions of monastic ideals among both observances. It is particularly interesting to note cases in which journalists were unable to make proper distinctions, as even misunderstandings can be instructive. Not surprisingly, in the area where Common Observance monasteries were more usual than Trappist monasteries, newspaper coverage tended (for better or worse) to take the older order as the norm against which to measure representatives of the newer, sometimes criticizing Trappist practices but sometimes celebrating them.

JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

The Cistercian monasteries in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were predominantly associated with the Common Observance; Trappist influence was stronger in France. During the summer of 1898, each Austro-Hungarian abbey was to hold a triduum with especially festive Masses and popular preachers; the same was expected of parishes incorporated into a Cistercian abbey's responsibility. Catholics who attended these churches three days in a row and fulfilled the usual requirements of confession, communion, and prayer for the pope were granted a plenary indulgence. Many Catholic periodicals, even in Germany, where there was at the time only one Cistercian abbey, covered this event, which was historic in its rarity. Some diocesan papers mentioned it, in order to inform diocesan priests working in the vicinity of Cistercian parishes of the grace to be obtained during the festivities.¹

Most abbeys celebrated the jubilee twice, once for their monastic community on March 21st (the actual day of commemoration) and a second time with the general public, when attendance often numbered in the thousands. Because of the better weather conditions, most abbeys chose dates later in the summer on which other solemn feasts fell, around August 15th (Assumption) or 20th (Saint Bernard). Some celebrated in the spring or autumn; some combined the historic occasion with a spiritual retreat or even, as was the case with Mehrerau, by founding a new monastery (Stična).²

The monasteries typically invited a different guest preacher for each of the three days. Processions made their way through decorated streets and squares; musical and theatrical performances took place before and after the Masses. Some of the celebrations were especially festive: in the Upper Austrian abbey of Schlierbach, the triduum ended on Aug. 21st with Masses accompanied by bonfires in the surrounding mountain

1. "Kirche Staat und Schule," *Reichspost*, Aug. 27, 1898, p. 5; *Vaterland*, May 6, 1898, p. 3; Aug. 20, 1898, p. 3; July 26, 1898, p. 6; "Zur achten Jahrhundertfeier der Gründung von Citeaux," *Historisch-politische Blätter für das katholische Deutschland* 122 (1898): 468–72.

2. Nachrichten, *Cistercienser-Chronik* 10 (1898): 124–25, 157–59, 185–92, 248–54, 313–20, 368–75.

ridges, artillery discharges, and gun salutes.³ The monks at Banja Luka (today in Bosnia-Herzegovina) celebrated for three days and began the last one especially early; vigils started at 1:00 a.m., to which they invited the laity. Rare ceremonies awaited the monks and their guests as the monastic office took its course at Banja Luka that day: there was a vesting ceremony for two choir novices and two lay brothers, then solemn vows for three confreres, and ultimately the blessing of a statue of Bernard in the cloisters.⁴ The women's abbey of Lichtental celebrated three solemn professions during the jubilee.⁵

THE NEWSPAPERS

THE FOLLOWING SELECTION of four papers is meant to be a sample of more or less clerical journalism that reached a wide audience. Many, but not all, of the men writing for these papers were themselves clerics; some were Cistercians. The same can be said of their readership. Because this article is concerned with general public perception of Cistercians, we are not citing articles from *Die Cistercienser-Chronik*, the Order's own journal, which was written almost exclusively for and read by Cistercians. Further study could extend the research sample to other periodicals, even anti-clerical ones, in order to find more nuanced approaches to our question: how was the Cistercian Order, in all its past and recent complexity, understood in the Austro-Hungarian Empire at this particular moment, in the summer of 1898?

Die Reichspost (Empire News)

THIS DAILY (SOMETIMES twice daily) was printed from 1894 to 1938; it was the most important Catholic paper in Vienna. The editors were devoted to Catholic party politics and strongly supported the Austrian Christian Social Party; it was considered patriotic and bourgeois, sticking to the

3. "Kirche Staat und Schule," *Reichspost*, Aug. 27, 1898, p. 5.

4. "Kirche Staat und Schule," *Reichspost*, Aug. 27, 1898, p. 5.

5. "Nachrichten," *Cistercienser-Chronik* 10 (1898): 318.

party line in a semi-official manner and read in all of the Habsburg Empire. Many clergy were among its readers; these and others were served by the paper's daily column on church matters. Traditionally, the *Reichs-post* was seen as the counterpoint to the leftist *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (*Workers' News*). In the year that interests us, 1898, the print run for the Sunday edition was approximately 8,000.

Das Vaterland (The Fatherland)

DAS VATERLAND WAS published daily from 1860 to 1911. The editions usually consisted of only four pages, and its readership was small, but the paper served the Catholic elite. Its funding came from Bohemian aristocrats who wanted to "propagate the monarchy and a specifically German, not Slavic, identity." Its arts section printed historical novels, often with medieval topics, in serial form. In 1898 it had 5,000 subscribers.⁶

Correspondenz der Associatio Perseverantiae Sacerdotalis (Newsletter of the Association for Priestly Perseverance)

THIS PAPER (HEREAFTER CAPS) existed from 1880 to 1970. It was printed for members of a sodality that was founded in 1868 by a group of alumni and superiors from Vienna's Archdiocesan Seminary. The editor was usually the seminary rector. This association clearly positioned itself as a reform movement in the Ultramontane tradition, seeking the sanctity of priests. They accented devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. At certain points, the paper had readers in over 230 dioceses, many of them in overseas missions. In 1892, the association boasted 7,644 members, yet there were many more to come: in 1918 the tally was 24,091.⁷ For the jubilee year of 1898, the readership might be estimated at 10,000.

6. Kurt Paupié, *Handbuch der österreichischen Pressegeschichte 1848–1959* (Vienna, 1960) 1:95–96. Listed in *Österreichische retrospektive Bibliographie*, hg. von Helmut Lang–Ladislaus Lang unter Mitarbeit von Wilma Buchinger, Reihe 2, vol. 3, p. 335 (= ORBI 2, 3:5618).

7. Alkuin Schachenmayr, "Die Correspondenz der Associatio Perseverantiae Sacerdotalis. Eine klerikale Zeitschrift im Umfeld des Wiener Priesterseminars (1880–1970)," *Katholiken im langen 19.*

Korrespondenzblatt für den katholischen Klerus Österreichs
(*Austrian Catholic Clergy News*)

THE *KORRESPONDENZBLATT FÜR den katholischen Klerus Österreichs* (hereafter KBKÖ) was founded in 1882 by Berthold Egger, a canon of Klosterneuburg Abbey, one of the most venerable and best-endowed religious houses in greater Vienna. Despite the abbey's strong ties to Austrian aristocracy and the imperial Habsburg tradition, the KBKÖ had a special interest in reaching the working classes through the pastoral efforts of its clerical readers. In order to expand his readership beyond the clergy, Berthold Egger also founded a paper called *Der Arbeiter* (*The Worker*).

Cistercian Readership

AS AN EXAMPLE of the above-mentioned papers' circulation among Cistercians of the Common Observance in 1898, let us take the example of Heiligenkreuz Abbey. It subscribed to *Die Reichspost* and *Das Vaterland* for the community's recreation room. We know that the other two papers (KBKÖ and CAPS) were certainly read in this monastery, since priests from the abbey wrote articles for them; they were circulated privately among the confreres.

ANALYSIS OF THE COVERAGE

Historical Sources and Ideals

SOME OF THE articles aim at being historical journalism, existing in a grey zone between fact and fiction like the historical novels published in the same newspapers. While this writing can tend toward romanticism, some of the writers (Cistercian priests were among this group) would cite scholarly publications like the 1892 Solemnes edition of the *Nomas-*

Jahrhundert. Akteure – Kulturen – Mentalitäten. Festschrift für Otto Weiß, ed. Dominik Burkard and Nicole Priesching (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2014) 91–116.

ticon Cisterciense.⁸ The newspapers were clearly interested in both styles of writing.

In order to commemorate the jubilee, a third of the cover of *Das Vaterland* on May 14, 1898 was filled by an article about the founding of the Cistercian Order; the report extends over three pages. Most likely taken from a similar article by P. Gregor Müller in the *Cistercienser-Chronik*, the *Vaterland* version takes the form of a traditional narrative of the founding abbots: Robert is portrayed as zealous, Alberic as the administrator, and Stephan as a scholar and aesthete. As was common at the time, the Order is portrayed as having been unstable until Bernard's quasi-messianic entry. Then the article goes on to emphasize the Morimond Filiation as the foundation for German-speaking Cistercians, even though the days of filiations were long past. The anonymous author then portrays the early modern era of congregations as a time of decline and fall, exacerbated by wars and disputes over observances.⁹

Another common perception of the order at the time was as a colonizing force, spreading civilization to underdeveloped Eastern European territories during the twelfth century. Several articles in KBKÖ took up this theme and applied it to Austrian history, consequently developing a particularly Catholic image of Austria and its rulers. Because in 1898 there were more Common Observance monasteries in Austro-Hungary than anywhere else in the world, the empire thus appeared particularly "Cistercian,"¹⁰ even in its music and architecture!¹¹

The KBKÖ, whose founder was devoted to labor theories and the pastoral care of workers, conveyed clerics' perceived contribution to Austrian culture by suggesting that modern-day monastic clergy (whether in parishes or in abbeys) should rediscover a manner of work that itself witnessed to monastic values. One anonymous author suggested that pastors in small incorporated parishes could study church history, write devotional pamphlets, publish apologetics, study Thomas Aquinas, or

8. "Zur achthundertjährigen Jubiläumsfeier des Cistercienser-Ordens," *Vaterland*, May 14, 1898, pp. 1–3, here 2.

9. "Zur achthundertjährigen Jubiläumsfeier des Cistercienser-Ordens," *Vaterland*, May 14, 1898, pp. 1–3, here 2.

10. Tezelin Halusa, Review of Vacandard, *Leben des heiligen Bernard von Clairvaux*, trans. Matthias Sierp, 2 vols. (Mainz 1897/98), in KBKÖ 17 (1898): Augustinus, 66–67.

11. "Die ausser dem Stifte befindlichen Capitulare," KBKÖ 8 (1898): 282–83.

even do research in the natural sciences.¹² He implied that the monastics of his day were occupied with tasks that did not correspond to traditional ideals of monastic work.

Reality

THE NEWSPAPERS FOUND frequent occasions to make distinctions between theoretical ideals derived from the Order's medieval origins and the realities of Cistercian life in Austria in 1898. One ideal was the General Chapter, to be held annually among the abbots of the Order, and the Conventual Chapter held more frequently in the individual monasteries. The readers of the KBKÖ of 1898 could not have been expected to know about these traditions. The members of religious houses should have been informed about them, but many weren't. One KBKÖ author even asked whether members of the chapter who lived outside their abbeys in parish rectories were eligible to vote in Conventual Chapter, thus indicating that there was not much voting going on at the time. In fact, other parts of the article show that the author had difficulty distinguishing cathedral chapters from monastic ones.¹³ Indeed, chapter meetings were rare at the time. If they were held, the Cistercians working in remote parishes often did not attend.

Trappist advertising in some of the above-named journals draws our attention to further inconsistencies. How did the reform ideals of asceticism and fasting correspond to fundraising efforts based on the sale of alcohol and sweets purportedly produced by Trappist monks? There was an agent selling Trappist merchandise in central Vienna (Lenaugasse 7); among other products, they sold liqueurs from the Trappist Abbey of Notre Dame des Sept-Douleurs in Latrun (Latroun), located about fifteen kilometers from Jerusalem. The *Reichspost* advertised Trappist chocolate from a monastery in Reichenburg, Trappist tea from the order's missions in China, and remedies for constipation and gout. This merchandise was sold not only in Vienna, but also in stores in Graz, Brno, and Budapest,

12. "Die ausser dem Stifte befindlichen Capitulare," KBKÖ 8 (1898): 282–83.

13. "Die Stiftskapitulare und ihr Recht, an den Capiteln theilzunehmen," KBKÖ 14 (1898): 491–92, here 491.

among others.¹⁴ The KBKÖ ran advertisements with drawings of tonsured monks, intended to get readers to buy Trappist “medication” ranging from “blood purification” to laxatives designed by a physician named Debreyne, who seemed to be related to an abbey in some way. Products made by ascetic monks were clearly thought to cure ailments caused by excessive consumption.

There is a conspicuous lack of such advertising coming from Common Observance abbeys, even though they often ran vast vineyards with large-scale wine production that dated back into the Middle Ages. One explanation for this difference may lie in the fact that the older, historic abbeys had a more solid financial base, or that their businesses were well-established and therefore needed less advertising. Another reason could lie in their relatively good financial endowments, although they were often pressed for funds. Finally, the lack of advertising for Common Observance goods may stem from their prestige as institutions of national heritage, not wanting to be publicly associated with common trade, even if they were reliant on it.

Indeed, the ancient Cistercian abbeys of the Common Observance were often seen as monuments to Austria’s historical origins, a view that, in turn, pointed to the benevolence and support of local dynasties more than to a monastic movement coming from Burgundy. The medieval affiliation that these old abbeys had once had with Cîteaux appeared to newspaper writers and readers around 1898 as a secondary association at best. Yet the modern Trappists were portrayed as medieval. The *Vaterland’s* story on the Trappist General Chapter in Tre Fontane (Rome), which maintained erroneously that the “Order was founded 800 years ago,” is printed on a page that also contains, just a few centimeters away, a report on the grand opening of the Petrinum, a monumental minor seminary in Linz. The Linz ceremony is described in the same detail as the one in Rome. Several cardinals were in attendance at both, various aspects were described, yet the Common Observance monks in attendance in Linz were not described as Cistercians, but simply as “order priests.” Cistercians from Wilhering, Benedictines from Kremsmünster and Lambach, Premonstratensians from Schlägl (the abbeys close to Linz) were all identified solely with reference to their

14. *Reichspost*, Oct. 30, 1898, 14. This paper frequently printed similar advertisements.

abbeys' geographical names, but not to their order. By contrast, clerics from the Franciscan and Redemptorist Orders were identified according to their order's name. This phenomenon seems to occur when an abbey is so well established in local circles that people forget it belongs to an international order.¹⁵

A similar phenomenon occurred when journalists and even abbey employees confused the Cistercian jubilee of 1898 with other commemorations, such as the fiftieth anniversary of the Habsburg emperor's coronation, which was also celebrated that year. A postcard depicting Heiligenkreuz Abbey and sold in the tourist shop there made a double anniversary of 1898, even though the Habsburgs were not yet on the scene when the Cistercian Order was founded and were also not sponsors for Heiligenkreuz. The example shows how the later Habsburg patronage for Heiligenkreuz was played up, inviting confusion. The jubilee in the Cistercian Abbey of Schlierbach—we already mentioned the particularly festive artillery salvos and bonfires on the nearby mountain tops—conflated the two occasions in no uncertain terms: the Cistercian festivities on August 21st were described in the *Reichspost* as “constituting at once the main event in this year's imperial celebration.”¹⁶

St. Bernard

NOT LEAST OF all because many abbeys celebrated the jubilee on Aug. 20th, the feast of Saint Bernard, journalists conflated the Cistercian jubilee with some sort of commemoration for the famous saint.¹⁷ To this day he is often thought to be the Order's founder. The confusion was only too understandable, considering the 1898 publication of the German translation of Elphegius Vacandard's major biography of Bernard, which had been translated for the occasion.¹⁸

15. “Order priests” are referred to as “Clerus aus dem Regularstande,” “Zur achthundertjährigen Jubiläumsfeier des Cistercienser-Ordens,” *Vaterland*, May 14, 1898, 1–3, here 2–3.

16. “bildete zugleich den Mittelpunkt der diesjährigen Kaiserfeier,” “Kirche Staat und Schule,” *Reichspost*, Aug. 27, 1898, p. 5.

17. “Zur achthundertjährigen Jubiläumsfeier des Cistercienser-Ordens,” *Vaterland*, May 14, 1898, 1–3, here 2.

18. Tezelin Halusa, Review of Vacandard, *Leben des heiligen Bernard von Clairvaux*.

Other Bernardine events that year show how Bernard was portrayed as the “greatest” Cistercian because of his manifold talents. The KBKÖ, with its largely clerical readership, printed several reviews of publications by and about Bernard that had intentionally been slated for publication by Cistercian priests during the jubilee.¹⁹ Yet other Cistercian personalities, even the three founders of Cîteaux, were rarely mentioned in 1898.

Cistercians or Trappists?

THERE WAS MUCH confusion in the coverage concerning the use of the names Cistercian and Trappist and the age of each. Often the news reports did not distinguish between the two terms, probably because of the authors’ ignorance of the differences. That lack of distinction is itself revealing. Other writers, however, were careful to underline the differences. Yet another group of writers engaged in polemics about which of the two groups was more legitimate. The *Reichspost* reported in 1899 that monks had purchased the historical abbey of Cîteaux after losing it more than a hundred years earlier to revolutionary forces, but the story referred to the buyers as “the Cistercian Order” and their “Abbot General” Sebastian Wyart, whereas Wyart was a Trappist abbot from Sept-Fons. The Order for which he bought Cîteaux had not existed (at least, not as a canonical entity) a hundred years before.²⁰

Reporting on jubilee celebrations in Rome, the *Vaterland* confused many details, showing how difficult it was for contemporaries to distinguish among the monastic observances. In one sentence, the coverage states that the order of reformed Cistercians was commonly called Trappist and that it was commemorating its 800th anniversary by holding a General

19. Nivard Schlögl, *Geist des heiligen Bernhard. Geistliche Lesungen auf alle Tage des Jahres aus den Schriften des heil. Abtes und Kirchenlehrers* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1898). Review in KBKÖ 17 (1898): Aug 72–73 and in KBKÖ 18 (1899) Augustinus, 66–67; Tezelin Halusa, *Flores Sancti Bernardi. Lebensweisheit des heiligen Bernhard von Clairvaux* (Regensburg [no date]). Review by Alois Pichler in KBKÖ 17 (1898): Augustinus, 71.

20. “Der Cistercienser-Orden hat in Frankreich seine ihm vor mehr als hundert Jahren durch die Revolution entrissene Gründungsstätte Cîteaux wieder in Besitz genommen,” *Kirche Staat und Schule, Reichspost*, Aug. 19, 1899, p. 7. The same story had been printed a day before in Munich’s *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Aug. 18, 1899, p. 10.

Chapter in Tre Fontane.²¹ Tre Fontane Abbey may have been famous as a medieval foundation, but it was closed down in 1826 and founded anew by monks of the Strict Observance in 1867. The Trappist General Chapter was actually quite a new event, and to legitimize it, they invited Abbot Hildebrand de Hemptinne, the Benedictine Abbot Primate, to pontificate at the closing Mass. Then they served a “feast consisting only of fasting dishes.” A papal audience followed the next day. Three cardinals and several bishops were in attendance at the feast, among them Cardinal Mazzella, who had presided, in 1892, over the General Chapter, which had resolved the historical step of founding the new order with Pope Leo XIII’s approving consent.

Hemptinne must have been rushing from one Cistercian event to the next, because on May 3, 1898, he also presided at the Common Observance’s Pontifical Vespers as part of the triduum at Santa Croce Abbey in Rome. There was an equally illustrious group of monastic superiors and cardinals at this event.²²

Journalistic Representations of the Common Observance

IN 1898, CAPS printed an obituary about the Heiligenkreuz monk Father Clemens Nothhaft, who may serve here as an example for common perceptions about the Common Observance.²³ He was born in a parish that “belonged to” (was incorporated into) Heiligenkreuz, became a chorister in the abbey, and then entered the novitiate. After taking priestly orders, he worked for nine years in abbey parishes until ill health forced him to return to the abbey. At the time, it was not normal for priests under retirement age to reside in the abbey; among the only reasons for them to be in the enclosure on a long-term basis were ill health and bad character. The article justifies Father Clemens’ presence in the abbey by portraying him as particularly devout; he said more prayers than required by the monastic office by reciting the Marianum regularly. In addition to his

21. “Der Orden der reformierten Cistercienser, gewöhnlich Trappisten genannt, hat aus Anlaß seines achthundertjährigen Bestehens in der hiesigen Abtei zu den drei Brunnen vom 21. bis 28. d. M. ein Generalcapitel abgehalten,” Rom, *Vaterland*, May 4, 1898 (Abendblatt): 3.

22. “Nachrichten,” *Cistercienser-Chronik* 10 (1898): 188.

23. CAPS 19.8 (1898): 146–47.

good attendance at choir, he regularly participated in Eucharistic Adoration and Marian devotions. He often went to confession. The newspaper article suggests that he received a special celestial seal of identification with his order by dying on the Feast of the Assumption (August 15), the Marian feast most important among Cistercians. That was also the date of his first Mass as a young priest.

The fact that Nothhaft was buried in Heiligenkreuz in a plot next to the famous Cistercian historian and monk of Zwettl, Leopold Janauschek, prompted the comment, “a humble and modern religious lay next to the researcher and scholar.”²⁴ Janauschek’s *Origines Cistercienses* are to this day an unparalleled accomplishment, yet his work had not allowed him to participate regularly in monastic life. The *Vaterland* was willing to overlook this peculiar situation: Janauschek had lived in a private apartment in Baden, a fashionable spa resort about 150 km away from his home abbey. In its coverage of his funeral Mass, at which the Zwettl abbot officiated, the paper made no comment on the fact that it took place neither in the abbey of Zwettl nor in the abbey of Heiligenkreuz but in Baden. Janauschek was later buried in Heiligenkreuz, because he taught at the seminary there, but he was not a member of that community.²⁵

The *Vaterland* clearly favored the Common Observance. One anonymous author, who was probably himself a Cistercian, presented the Common Observance as the result of “wise consideration of changing times, guided by the Holy See and the General Chapters.”²⁶ He criticized Trappists, along with the Spanish, Portuguese, Foliant, and Aragonian Congregations as “those who ignore contemporary times and claim to be holding on to earlier observances.”²⁷ The author was aware of a trisection of the Cistercian Order at the General Chapter of 1869 into the following observances of *communis*, *media* (Congregatio Senanquensis), and *stricta*. He criticized the conflation of Trappists with “real Cistercians”

24. “neben dem Forscher und Gelehrten der bescheidene und demüthige Ordensmann,” CAPS 19.8 (1898): 146–47.

25. “Professor Dr. Leopold Janauschek †,” *Vaterland*, July 24, 1898, p. 4.

26. At the end of an increasingly polemical article, he cites the Mehrerau motto: *Non mergor* (“I shall not drown”). “Zur achthundertjährigen Jubiläumsfeier des Cistercienser-Ordens,” *Vaterland*, May 15, 1898, p. III.

27. *Vaterland*, May 14, 1898, p. 3.

and did not consider Jean de Rancé to have founded any order.²⁸ He maintained that Trappists had enjoyed recent expansion only because of the lax educational standards they required of entering monks. He described the Common Observance, on the other hand, as being devoted to scholarship, teaching, and pastoral work.²⁹

In an article printed later that year concerning the recent re-establishment of monastic life at Cîteaux as a Trappist abbey, a writer for the *Vaterland* claims that although the renewal there was good news, it would have been preferable if monks from the Common Observance had reclaimed the famous abbey.³⁰

Journalistic Representations of Trappists

NO AUSTRIAN ABBEYS followed Trappist observances in an explicit manner in 1898, and certainly none had broken with the historic order in 1892, but several new Trappist communities from outside the empire had settled in Austro-Hungarian territories—those in Banja Luka were mentioned above; there was another in Reichenberg (Liberec), northern Bohemia.

The Trappists were noticeably different from the Cistercians of the Common Observance, and clearly impressive. Karl Ruff's book³¹ about their Abbey Oelenberg (which lay in the territory of Alsace, at the time part of Germany) got reviewed in many Austrian papers³² during the jubilee, even though the abbey was not located in Austro-Hungary. The *Reichspost* placed a laudatory book review on the front page of the April 7, 1898, issue. The article makes no mention of the fact that there were

28. The author draws this "Trappist" account from a pamphlet by Karl Ruff, "Die Trappistenabtei Oelenberg und der Reformierte Cistercienser-Orden" (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1898), 127–28.

29. "Zur achthundertjährigen Jubiläumsfeier des Cistercienser-Ordens," *Vaterland*, May 15, 1898, p. II.

30. "daß Cîteaux lieber wieder in die Hände des alten eigentlich Cistercienser-Ordens gekommen wäre, doch ist es immerhin erfreulich, daß an dieser ehrwürdigen monastischen Stätte wieder Mönche ihr Heim aufgeschlagen haben." "Wiederherstellung des Klosters Cîteaux," *Vaterland*, Dec. 4, 1898, p. II.

31. Karl Ruff, *Die Trappistenabtei Oelenberg und der reformierte Cistercienserorden* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1898).

32. Reviews appeared in Dillinger's *Reise- und Fremden-Zeitung* (Apr. 20, 1898, 34), *Reichspost* (Apr. 7, 1898, 1–2), *Straßburger Post* (April 1898), and *Beilage des Grazer Volksblatts* (Apr. 10, 1898).

abbeys of the Common Cistercian Observance in Austria, and claims that Trappist monks lived according to the “Rule of St. Robert.”³³ The paper, for which many Common Observance priests were authors, described the monastic life in Oelenberg using romantic phrases full of admiration; the “reformed” Cistercians in the Alsatian abbey are portrayed as ascetics and hard workers, devoted to obedience and mortification, with several of the monks sleeping nightly in coffins.

Father Feyrer, a Cistercian priest of the Common Observance, was one of many who reacted. In his article for the KBKÖ, he conceded the merits of a stricter observance, but insisted on more factual descriptions of their way of life. He explained that Trappists of the day did not greet one another by saying “*Memento mori*” and that they did not sleep in coffins, recalling that they were not even buried in coffins, therefore why sleep in one? He did, however, claim that they prepared themselves for death by being laid out on a mat and covered in ashes.³⁴

Another KBKÖ writer tended to harsher critique, dismissing the Trappist penchant for farm work, which he saw as “in opposition to the ordinances of the General Chapter, papal directives, and the example given by Saints Stephen Harding and Bernard themselves.”³⁵ Clearly, the Common Observance had given up manual labor long ago, but many of their members were comfortable with the notion of development in monastic observances. Change did not necessarily mean decline.

Even their admirers believed that Trappists were to be handled with care, their way of life being somehow imbalanced and therefore not advisable for average Catholics. The KBKÖ printed a book review of a Rancé biography in 1897; at this point he was credited as the Father of the Trappist Order, “the founder of the most austere of all monastic orders.” The portrayal was thoroughly positive, but made mention of the critique heard often, that Rancé was a Jansenist or Gallicanist. The Benedictine reviewer concluded by recommending the book for a clerical audience, because it had a lot of quotations from de Rancé. Laypeople, however, were not to read it.³⁶

33. Feuilletton. “Bei den Trappisten,” *Reichspost*, Apr. 7, 1898, 1–2.

34. L. Feyrer, “Die Trappistenabtei Oelenberg und der reformierte Cistercienserorden von Karl Ruff,” KBKÖ 17 (1898): Augustinus p. 73.

35. KBKÖ, May 15, 1898, p. I.

36. Robert Breitschöpf, OSB, review of Bernhard Schmid, OSB, *Armand Jean le Bouthillier de*

The Trappist abbot of Mariastern in Banja Luka accentuated the extremes by quoting Pope Leo XIII's speech to the Trappists' General Chapter in 1898, in which he was purported to have said, "You are an elite order, and we exhort you to continue on the path upon which you have so courageously embarked."³⁷ Such triumphalist claims could make the reformed monks unpopular among the established houses of the Common Observance, but no one could deny that Trappists had much greater success than the Common Observance in their missionary endeavors. A Benedictine author enthused in 1898 that the Trappists had presumably doubled their ranks since 1869 and founded dozens of new monasteries since then. Another Benedictine noted that the Common Observance paled in comparison: "In contrast to the Trappists and their maternal order, the Benedictines, the Cistercian Order of the not-exactly-strict observance, usually just referred to simply as 'Cistercians,' has to date not made a single foundation outside of Europe."³⁸ Other Austrian papers reported on adventurous missionaries who were associated with Franz Pfanner, the Trappist abbot born in Vorarlberg, Austria, whose movement later became independent and is known today as the Missionary Order of Mariannahill. Pfanner recruited Austrian men, some of whom died in the course of their efforts in Africa.³⁹

CONCLUSION

WHAT DID OUR four newspapers present in their coverage of the 1898 jubilee as admirable about each order, and what was criticized? The Common Observance emerges as the more cultured order, in part because of the ancient abbeys' historical significance and their educational work.

Rancé (Regensburg: Nationale Verlagsanstalt, 1897), KBKÖ 18 (1897): 70–71.

37. "Sie sind ein Elite-Orden (un Ordre élite), und Wir ermahnen Sie, den Weg beharrlich weiter zu wandeln, den Sie so muthig betreten haben," *Die reformirten Cistercienser* [Auszüge eines Leserbriefs von Abt Dominikus, Mariastern], *Vaterland*, Dec. 17, 1898, p. 6.

38. "Zum Unterschied vom Trappisten-Orden und seinem Mutter-Orden, dem Benediktiner-Orden, hat der Cisterzienser-Orden von der nicht strengsten Observanz, gewöhnlich schlechthin Cisterzienser geheißen, bis jetzt keine außer-europäische Niederlassung zu verzeichnen [Köln. Volkszeitung], *Ave Maria Mariengrüße* (Schottenstift) 1898, p. 348.

39. "Pater Maurus" was "der fünfte Trappist, der in den tückischen Flüssen Südafrikas sein Leben einbüßte." *Vorarlberger Volksblatt*, June 16, 1898, p 3–4; "Ein Trappisten-Pater ertrunken!" *Grazer Volksblatt*, June 14, 1898, p. 7.

They were, after all, well-known tourist attractions, as an article in the *Reichspost* claimed: "Every Viennese knows Heiligenkreuz."⁴⁰ But did Catholics go there to pray and be edified by examples of monastic asceticism? The Trappists, being outsiders and comparatively radical, are presented in the newspapers as the more colorful group of monks. At worst they counted as religious extremists with questionable idealism, yet their pious ardor and statistical expansion in the decades leading up to 1898 earned them many sympathizers.

As far as historical fact is concerned, the four above-named newspapers are often inaccurate. Trappists are presented as medieval Cistercians, with little or no explanation of how or when their group (itself a post-medieval phenomenon) was formed. Almost never is it mentioned that the new Trappist Order was founded relatively recently, in 1892. Furthermore, coverage of the jubilee often confuses the occasion with a celebration of St. Bernard's birthday (that date is itself unknown) or the fiftieth anniversary of Emperor Franz Joseph's coronation in 1848. Closer examination of these secondary anniversaries would have shown that references to Robert, Alberic, and Stephen were more appropriate than to Bernard, and that the reigning emperor's dynasty was not yet old enough to be relevant to most Cistercian foundations in Austria.

The articles written by Cistercians are easily divided into two camps (Trappist vs. Common Observance), and they usually belie well-known stereotypes. Instead of dwelling on them, it is more revealing to examine other indicators, like the Benedictine writers who praise the reform monks or the secular reporters' often skewed perception of Cistercian history. Finally, the newspapers' advertisements are themselves important indicators of how the different monasteries were perceived.

Our brief study has been limited to four newspapers chosen because they were not subsidized by any group of Cistercians but were read in many abbeys, and several Cistercian fathers wrote for them. A further step could consist in analyzing smaller periodicals like the Catholic Mission-Calendars, important popular magazines in their own right.⁴¹

40. "Doppeljubiläum der Ortschaft Heiligenkreuz," *Reichspost*, Oct. 25, 1900, p. 4.

41. E.g., *Mariannhiller Kalender*, *Katholischer Volkskalender für die Oesterreichische Monarchie*, *Thierschutz-Kalender*, *Kinder-Kalender*, *Soldatenfreund*, *Katholischer Lehrer-Kalender*, *Oesterreichischer Hauskalender*, *Ave Maria! Mariengrüße (Schottenstift)*, *Christliche Pädagogische Blätter*, *Marienkinder*, *St. Benedicts Stimmen*.

However, we hope to have shown the value of investigating popular historical writing, which reveals attitudes and stereotypes otherwise difficult to document.

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